

Members:

Rep. Thomas Kromkowski, Chairperson
Rep. Robert Behning
Rep. Kathy Richardson
Sen. Sue Landske
Sen. Billie Breaux
Sen. Becky Skillman
Sen. Allie Craycraft
James Barcome



CENSUS DATA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: August 13, 1998
Meeting Time: 10:30 A.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St.,
Room 156-C
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 1

Members Present: Rep. Thomas Kromkowski, Chair; Rep. Robert Behning;
Rep. Kathy Richardson; Sen. Becky Skillman; Sen. Allie Craycraft.

Members Absent: Sen. Sue Landske; Sen. Billie Breaux; James Barcome.

Call to Order and Introduction of Members

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m. and introduced Committee members and staff present.

Report on Census Bureau Block Boundary Suggestion Program

The Chair called on the co-managers of the Block Boundary Suggestion Program, Maureen Bard and Mark Stratton, to report about the program.¹

Ms. Bard described to the Committee the Census Bureau's Year 2000 Redistricting Data

1. Ms. Bard and Mr. Stratton distributed to the Committee a copy of the slides and maps used in their presentation. A copy of these materials is on file in the Legislative Information Center, Room 230 of the State House, Indianapolis, Indiana. The telephone number of the Legislative Information Center is (317) 232-9856, and the mailing address is 200 W. Washington St., Suite 301, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2789.

Program of which the Block Boundary Suggestion Program ("BBSP") is one phase. She explained that the purpose of the program is to give state and local governments the ability to suggest to the Census Bureau visible geographic features to consider using for Census block boundaries. The Legislative Council authorized participation in this voluntary Census Bureau program by adoption of a resolution in 1996. Ms. Bard described the initial work of the BBSP when site visits were made to counties to update various geographic information contained in the Census Bureau's TIGER® files. This work was accomplished from January through May 1997 with submission of information to the Census Bureau in August 1997. Ms. Bard explained the next step of the BBSP, which began in February 1998, as a verification process that attempts to resolve problems in electronic maps that may have occurred as a result of adding new geographic information to the TIGER® files from earlier BBSP submissions and other data programs conducted by the Census Bureau. The verification work of the BBSP also attempts to resolve issues with the Census Bureau relating to suggested census block boundaries that the Census Bureau may have initially rejected. Ms. Bard reported to the Committee that 34 counties chose to change precinct boundaries before the precinct freeze went into effect in January 1998. The 1998 precinct boundaries also must be incorporated into the electronic data submitted to the Census Bureau.

Mr. Stratton discussed the status of the verification work. Mr. Stratton reported that verification has been completed with respect to 72 counties and submitted to the Census Bureau. He explained that several factors determine the order in which counties are handled: availability of electronic information from the Census Bureau, the number of suggestions first submitted to the Census Bureau under BBSP, whether the county revised precinct boundaries during the last opportunity before the current freeze, and the population of the county. Mr. Stratton reported that during this part of the project more than 5,000 polygons of new geography have been added to the information for the 72 completed counties. He also said that the number of problems that must be resolved with the Census Bureau has been decreased by approximately 10% and that approximately 75% of the problems relate to municipal annexations.

Discussion of Proposed Legislation for the 1999 Session

The Chair recognized Mr. J. Bradley King, Co-General Counsel of the Indiana Election Division, to present any proposals for legislation that might be recommended by the Indiana Election Commission or the Division. Mr. King reported that he had no drafts to discuss with the Committee at this meeting but that the Commission will recommend at least two amendments to the statutes. The first is a clarification of the filing deadline for the "large contribution" report required by IC 3-9-5-20. The statute currently requires that "large" contributions received not less than five days before an election be reported no later than noon five (5) days before the election. The second clarification of the statute relates to deadlines for filing campaign finance reports by candidates who are nominated by processes other than a primary election or a convention. Mr. King reminded the Committee that deadlines for filing certain campaign finance reports are measured from a candidate's "nomination date", a term the statute does not define for candidates nominated to fill a candidate vacancy, write-in candidates, and candidates who are nominated by petition. Mr. King provided the Committee with copies of two advisory opinions issued by the Indiana Election Commission intended to provide guidance to candidates regarding these ambiguities in the statutes until the General Assembly can address

them.²

Representative Behning commented that a candidate should not be required to file a large contribution report if the candidate received no large contributions. He said the requirement creates too much useless paperwork for candidates and election authorities. Representative Behning asked Mr. King whether the Election Division permits candidates to file large contribution reports by fax. He noted that the Marion County Election Board permitted filing this report by fax. Mr. King responded that the Division accepts fax transmission of large contribution reports and said that most large contribution reports are filed by fax transmission.

Senator Skillman observed that the rationale for requiring a large contribution report even if a candidate received no large contributions is to prevent "forgotten" large contributions that would not be reported until after the election on the candidate's annual report. Representative Behning said that Senator Skillman was correct that the reason for the requirement was to prevent deliberate nonfilings but he suggested that a less cumbersome means to discourage nonfiling would be to impose punitive sanctions against those who file late large contribution reports.

The Chair asked Mr. King to report about the Division's duplicate voter registration program. Mr. King explained that the "Duplicate Registration Elimination Program" provides a process for eliminating the names of voters who are registered at more than one address. Mr. King reminded the Committee that federal law does not permit the removal of inactive voters from the voter registration rolls until the after second general election the voter is inactive. It will not be until after the 1998 general elections that inactive voters can first be purged.

Senator Craycraft said that the problem of large lists of voters is growing as time passes. He said the federal government should give states more flexibility to remove the name of a voter who obviously no longer lives in a precinct in which the voter is registered. Mr. King responded that he and other Election Division staff will be attending a national conference of election officials where they could learn about the efforts in other states. Representative Behning suggested that the Indiana Congressional delegation should be contacted to urge that changes should be made in federal law so that voter registration lists can be purged without disenfranchising voters. Senator Skillman mentioned that growing voter registration roles artificially suppress the turnout percentage of voters. Representative Richardson reported that this is a serious problem in Hamilton County, noting that election officials in that county have particular problems with voters who have post office boxes for addresses or who stay in Florida for a substantial portion of the year.

Public Testimony

The Chair opened the meeting for those attending to provide suggestions or concerns to the Committee.

The Chair recognized Ms. Emmy Peebles, representing the League of Women Voters. Ms. Peebles reiterated her longstanding position advocating county commissioner districts with

2. Advisory Opinion 1998-01 concerns filing deadlines for the "large contribution" report. Advisory Opinion 1998-02 concerns filing of reports by candidates whose nomination date is not defined by the statute. A copy of each of these advisory opinions is on file in the Legislative Information Center (see footnote 1).

equal population. Ms. Peebles recounted her work in this area and noted that the local political problem concerned the interests of municipalities versus those of more rural parts of the county. Ms. Peebles offered Monroe County as an example: only one of the county commissioners resides in the district that includes Bloomington which comprises more than fifty percent of the population of the county.

Senator Skillman noted the election administration problems involving the presence of students on the voter registration roles in university communities. She said that the county is required to create precincts within the university that have few voters in the spring because the students have left campus.

Representative Richardson asked Ms. Peebles whether she thought that commissioners should represent a district or the entire county. Ms. Peebles responded that for her, the issue was one of fairness to the voters. She said that if representation of the entire county required commissioners to be elected at large, the commissioners should at least be required to be residents of districts that had equal population.

Senator Craycraft asked whether the county commissioners could not already do what Ms. Peebles advocates. She responded that while the commissioners have the legal authority to create commissioner districts of equal population, only one county has shown any interest in the idea.

The Chair recognized Ms. Julia Vaughn representing Common Cause and the Citizens Action Coalition. Ms. Vaughn reported that the Citizens Action Coalition had received a grant to do studies on issues related to campaign finance. She said that using grant funds, ten town meetings have been scheduled for this summer to gather citizens to discuss campaign finance issues. Ms. Vaughn said that over ten hours of tape recordings of these meetings have been compiled. A public opinion survey has been taken and two more are planned for next year.

Representative Behning asked whether the Committee should again discuss what the state is doing to make certain that an accurate census count is taken in Indiana. If the state wants to have an organized program to assure an accurate count, the next legislative session is the time to make any requests for funding for any programs. Carol Rogers from the Indiana University School of Business stated that the School is interested in replicating and improving on the efforts it made during the 1990 Census to assure an accurate census count in Indiana. Ms. Bard reported that the Census bureau web site has information about what states are doing and can do to assure an accurate count.

Next Meeting Date

The Chair set the Committee's next meeting date to be Tuesday, September 22 at 10:30 a.m.

Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at approximately 11:23 a.m.